San Francisco’s new sugar law and George Harrison: My Sweet Lord

By ACSH Staff — June 10, 2015

We talk about stupid stuff all the time. There is never a shortage.

But, even with the inexhaustible supply of this commodity, once in a while we run into something that is off the chart on the right side of the Stupidity Bell Curve. This is no small feat.

But, yesterday, the Rhodes Scholars that make up the San Francisco Board of Supervisors pulled it off with style. The measure they passed makes no sense on any level.

Let’s put aside the facts that sweet drinks are, at most, only one component of the obesity crisis (which is already subsiding anyhow), and that people have the right to consume sugar if they choose to do so. Perhaps we will even concede (but we really don’t) that even if demonization of sugar is dead on, that it makes no sense to single out sugar in soda, while leaving out ice cream, candy, or donuts.

Of course, this is all nonsense, but SF has taken nonsense to a new quantum level.

These geniuses have decided that not only is sugar bad for you, but that there is one iota difference of how it got into a product. And that despite this, they have come up with labeling requirements that warn people about products that contain more than 25 calories of added sugar.

ACSH’s Dr. Josh Bloom says, I normally try to avoid calling people stupid (OK, maybe that’s a lie), but even if this were true, I cannot think of any other way, synonyms aside, to describe the basis of what this proposed law entails.

This is because those who crafted the law exploited one of the most flawed and silliest myths in science: that it makes any difference HOW something got into a particular food or drink. This is the basis for the nonsensical added sugar essence of their law. Guess what? That’s REALLY stupid.

Supervisor Scott Wiener said Today, San Francisco has sent a clear message that we need to do more to protect our community’s health. These health warnings will help provide people
information they need to make informed decisions about what beverages they consume.

Uh, no they won t. They will simply confuse people even more.

Dr. Bloom refrains from additional name calling: Twelve ounces of orange juice contains 36 grams of sugar [1], which is equivalent to 144 calories. If somehow, there was such a thing as an orange without sugar, if you took the juice from it and added 36 grams of sugar, you would have a drink that is identical to orange juice that you now buy. Yet, under this law, the latter drink would have to be labeled and the former would not. Does this make any sense at all? Didn t think so.

The silliness of this law becomes even more evident once you realize that a 12 ounce can of Coke contains 39 grams of sugar virtually the same as orange juice. Yet, the law, which is supposed to provide people information they need to make informed decisions, does anything but; in fact, it does the exact opposite.

Dr. Bloom sums up, The Board of Supervisors has intentionally or otherwise created a law that reinforces a really terrible misconception. It does not matter if the sugar gets into the drink by way of the tree, or a scoop, dumptruck, or nuclear missile. The drink will be the same. They really should be ashamed of themselves. I guess the expression Drink the Kool-Aid takes on an entirely different meaning here.